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# SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 4th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. DINU (Romania)

Chariman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

EXPRESSION OF SYMPATHY IN CONNECTION WITH THE RECENT EARTHQUAKE IN EGYPT

1. Mr. AL MAKTARI (Yemen) expressed sympathy to the Government and people of Egypt in connection with the recent earthquake in that country.

2. The CHAIRMAN endorsed the expression of sympathy on behalf of all the members of the Committee.

3. Mr. ELZIMAITY (Egypt) thanked the Chairman for the expression of sympathy.

AGENDA ITEM 106: CURRENT FINANCIAL CRISIS OF THE UNITED NATIONS (A/46/600 and Add.1-3, A/46/765; A/C.5/47/13)

AGENDA ITEM 107: FINANCIAL EMERGENCY OF THE UNITED NATIONS (A/46/600 and Add.1-3, A/46/765; A/C.5/47/13)

AGENDA ITEM 124: ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY ASPECTS OF THE FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS (A/47/484)

4. Mr. THORNBURGH (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) said that the United Nations was at a crossroads where it would have to demonstrate whether or not it could effectively adapt to changing times. The Organization was being called upon to play new operational roles in peace-keeping and peacemaking, in addition to its standing roles of serving as a forum for debate, standard-setting in such areas as human rights and fashioning economic and social programmes for developing countries. Many doubted that the Organization could meet those challenges.

5. The United Nations now had a one-time window of opportunity to play the role in world affairs intended by its founders, an opportunity long denied in the political circumstances of the cold war.

6. The overall financial situation of the Organization continued to be a matter of overriding concern. As at 12 October 1992, unpaid assessed contributions totalled some $1.2 billion, of which $550 million was owed in respect of the regular budget and $605 million in respect of assessed peace-keeping operations. Only 18 Member States had paid their regular budget and peace-keeping assessments in full.

7. During virtually all of 1992 it had been necessary to borrow from various peace-keeping accounts to meet the cash requirements of other peace-keeping operations. Moreover, with all reserves exhausted, it had also become necessary, beginning in August, to borrow from various peace-keeping funds to meet the cash requirements of the regular budget. Some $80 million had so far been borrowed from peace-keeping funds to enable the Secretary-General to meet the obligations and ensure the continued functioning of the Organization. The

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Secretary-General, in his report on the financial situation of the United Nations (A/C.5/47/13), had indicated that unless at least $400 million of the unpaid assessments was collected between 30 September and 31 December 1992, the regular budget and all assessed peace-keeping operations would run out of funds simultaneously.

8. It was thus gratifying that the major contributor had recently paid $229 million, representing the bulk of its share of the regular budget, and that the third largest contributor had just paid $18 million. He trusted that other Member States with arrears and unpaid contributions would make every effort to fulfil their statutory financial obligations towards the Organization, since that alone would solve the Organization's financial problems. Under the current regulations Member States were required to pay assessments during the month following notification by the Secretary-General of their dues.

9. The shortage of funds to meet expenses, continuing uncertainty about the availability of funds in the immediate future, and the unremitting precariousness of the Organization's financial situation all combined to make efficient management of the United Nations extremely difficult.

10. Various proposals to solve the medium- and long-term financial problems of the Organization had been made at the forty-sixth session, as well as at the current session, in the Secretary-General's report entitled "An agenda for peace" (A/47/277-S/24111) and in his annual report on the work of the Organization (A/47/1). It should be noted, however, that those proposals, even if accepted, would have no immediate effect on the cash situation for the remainder of 1992.

11. In "An agenda for peace", the Secretary-General had referred to the chasm that had developed between the tasks entrusted to the Organization and the financial means provided to it. The question of the Organization's long-term financial security was of such importance and complexity that public awareness and support must be heightened.

12. To that end, the Secretary-General and the Ford Foundation had recently announced the formation of an international advisory group on United Nations financing, to be co-chaired by a former Chairman of the United States Federal Reserve Board and a retired Deputy Governor of the Japan Development Bank. The group included many eminent financial and governmental experts from around the world. The Secretary-General intended to transmit the group's recommendations to the General Assembly at the current session. With the political will to address the financial problems of the Organization, workable solutions could be found, but only the General Assembly could take the appropriate decisions.

13. The proposed programme budget outline for the biennium 1994-1995 (A/47/358) represented the Secretary-General's preliminary estimates of

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resources to accommodate the proposed programme of activities for the next biennium. The outline was projected on the basis of existing and anticipated mandates and a globally stable budget. In view of the increased role of the United Nations in many areas, significant redeployments of staff and other resources among the various budget sections were desirable and possible. While budgets for peace-keeping operations were rapidly increasing, regular budget funding was still central to all United Nations activities.

14. The budget outline for 1994-1995 proposed increases in four areas: overall policy-making; the new Departments of Political Affairs and Peace-keeping Operations; international cooperation for development; and human rights and humanitarian affairs. Diminished priority was suggested for common support services, including administration and management and conference services. In that priorities were expressed not only through the allocation of resources but also through the myriad decisions which constituted the daily life of the Organization, the setting of priorities was not just a technical exercise but was an integral part of the political discourse characterizing debate on the budget. To say that every programme was a priority was to say that nothing was a priority.

15. The Fifth Committee would also be called upon to review the Secretary-General's report on the prototype of a new budget format (A/C.5/47/3). The Secretariat believed that the proposed new format represented a welcome simplification, and that it would facilitate the decisions of the General Assembly on the Organization's budget.

16. Commenting on programme planning, he noted that the Committee had before it the first proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997. Revisions were proposed to some 40 programmes to reflect new mandates adopted since the adoption of the plan, the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the eighth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, as well as the results of the first phase of the restructuring of the Secretariat. In that connection the Fifth Committee would be called upon to consider the recommendation of the Committee for Programme and Coordination that a prototype of a possible new format of the medium-term plan should be presented for the following year. The Department of Administration and Management believed that the medium-term plan should be profoundly modified, since its length and complexity made it difficult to gain a clear perception of the Organization's policies, and there was a lack of any real involvement on the part of Member States in the substantive content of the plan.

17. The revised estimates for the current biennium in connection with the Secretary-General's initiatives on the first phase of the restructuring of the Secretariat (A/C.5/47/2) indicated that savings of some $4 million would be achieved as a result of the proposed elimination of 13 high-level posts in the Secretariat. Such a move, which would be in full conformity with General Assembly resolution 41/213, stemmed from the Secretary-General's decision to

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simplify the structure of the Secretariat so as to ensure clearer lines of responsibility and accountability as well as greater coherence in the implementation of the Organization's policies. In that regard, Headquarters organizational units had been consolidated into seven departments, headed by eight Under-Secretaries-General.

18. Turning to peace-keeping operations, he said that the financing of peace-keeping activities was the single most costly programme ever undertaken by the United Nations, accounting for over $2.5 billion in 1992. Ten of the 12 current peace-keeping operations were funded under the peace-keeping assessment formula, with 1992 appropriations ranging from a low of $21 million for MINURSO to a high of $838 million for UNAMIC/UNTAC. Two of the three operations established in 1992 (UNTAC and UNPROFOR) were the most costly ever fielded. Requirements for the maintenance of the existing peace-keeping operations for an additional six-month period were estimated at some $1 billion.

19. UNTAC, UNPROFOR and UNIFIL required large monthly outlays of cash. The level of collection of assessed contributions for peace-keeping operations had a direct impact on the provision of cash to meet the needs of the operations. Some of them could end the year with deficits in their special accounts if the payment pattern was not improved. During 1992 there had been a need for continued borrowing among the peace-keeping accounts in order to meet cash flow requirements. Loans had been made to UNIIMOG, ONUSAL and UNAVEM, and portions of those loans remained outstanding. In addition, part of the start-up costs of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) had been met from the trust fund in support of peacemaking and peace-keeping. The only operation that had been adequately financed throughout 1992 was MINURSO, and that was due to its reduced level of activities.

20. The cash flow situation could have been worse had reimbursements to troop contributors been made as originally planned. In fact only one progress payment for troop costs had been made in respect of UNTAC and UNPROFOR. At the end of October, amounts due to troop contributors would total some $250 million.

21. The Fifth Committee would also be called upon to consider the question of anomalies in the allocation of countries to the four contributor groups. In that connection the Secretary-General had received requests from Member States for a realignment of countries, based on, inter alia, the application of currency exchange rates and realistic per capita national income figures.

22. With respect to the management of resources and financial control, the Secretary-General and his staff attached great importance to their fiduciary responsibility for the prudent management of the Organization's resources. Care was taken to ensure that such resources were utilized for the purposes for which they had been provided, that they were spent with all due regard for economy, and that there was strict accountability at all stages for their use.

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23. The Board of Auditors, in its report on the accounts of the United Nations for the biennium 1990-1991 (A/47/315), had drawn the attention of the General Assembly to a number of cases of fraud or presumptive fraud. In all instances it had been the Administration which had identified the cases, and appropriate action had been taken to recover funds and institute disciplinary proceedings. In that connection the Secretary-General intended to propose the creation of a system-wide inspector general for the United Nations, taking into account that some of the functions to be performed were already being carried out by other entities. Unfortunately, a number of those entities had not lived up to expectations, and the United Nations system was not currently equipped to handle the new responsibilities that Member States would be entrusting to it.

24. Of equal importance was the maintenance and improvement of financial and other internal controls, in which connection the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) would bring major benefits. The Organization's internal audits had focused on the reliability and integrity of information; compliance with policies, plans, procedures, laws and regulations; the safeguarding of assets; the economical and efficient use of resources; and the attainment of established programme objectives.

25. Turning to conference services, he said that the report of the Secretary-General on the review of the Office of Conference Services (A/47/336) largely derived from a survey by the Management Advisory Service and work done by the Department of Administration and Management. It had already been decided to initiate pilot projects to implement some of the recommendations in the translation services area and consideration was being given to the better use of outside contractors.

26. A report on conference services at Vienna would also be submitted at the current session. Some progress had been made during 1992 towards the goal of a unified conference service to be administered by the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV). Discussions on that matter between UNOV and UNIDO were continuing.

27. Implementation of the optical disk project was continuing, and some installations had now been completed at Geneva and New York and systems training had begun at both locations. The testing of connections to the missions of Member States in New York would be carried out in the fourth quarter of 1992.

28. As a result of the continually increasing demands made by Member States for more regularly scheduled meetings, conferences and more timely documentation, the burden on the Office of Conference Services was becoming more dramatic. Clearly the situation could not continue. There were but three solutions: to decrease the demands made on conference services by limiting the number of meetings and conferences; to change entitlements; or to increase the quantity of services provided. The Department of Administration

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and Management was prepared to play its part by using its resources in the most effective way through the better utilization of technology and better management of its human resources, but it would be much aided if Member States were willing to look seriously at the current calendar of meetings and conferences and determine whether there were some that were simply not necessary. It might be worth while considering a moratorium on international conferences through, for example, the fiftieth anniversary year of 1995, to allow time for an in-depth assessment of the question.

29. With regard to the programme of technological innovations, it was essential to establish a viable global computer and telecommunications infrastructure for the United Nations. With such an infrastructure in place, the Organization could benefit from a number of new technological developments. Central to such an approach was the desktop computer, which was becoming the prime vehicle for sharing and integrating information, thus facilitating organizational work programmes. The United Nations must make a strong commitment to increased use of modern technology, which in turn could enhance the use of its most important resource, the staff of the Organization.

30. The Integrated Management Information System IMIS project was foremost among the technological innovations programmes. The first applications of IMIS at Headquarters were planned for early 1993, and the system should be fully implemented by the end of 1993, with installation at other major offices during 1994. A review of the project by a team of independent experts, as mandated by the General Assembly at the forty-sixth session, had confirmed that the expected benefits would be realized. The need for such a system, which could provide management with up-to-date financial and personnel information, had been dramatically demonstrated in past months. IMIS would be an important strategic tool for managing the Organization and further rationalizing the work of the United Nations.

31. With regard to personnel questions, the restructuring exercise now under way was aimed at consolidating the earlier restructuring efforts and extending the process to offices away from New York. Under the first phase, a number of departments and offices had been merged, producing a more streamlined structure in which the focus of responsibility was clearer. At the same time, new offices had been created to reflect the new demands placed upon the Organization by Member States. With the new structure in place, a detailed review of staffing tables had been conducted in order to streamline and strengthen wherever appropriate. It was not a retrenchment exercise, but, rather, a phase of adaptation to new demands.

32. A temporary freeze on external recruitment for vacant posts in the Professional category had been introduced in February, providing an opportunity to evaluate on a case-by-case basis the need to fill particular vacancies, as well as to make the maximum use of in-house talent and to redeploy unneeded vacant posts to rapidly developing areas, such as peace-keeping and humanitarian efforts. The intention was not to change the

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current financial regulations on the transfer of resources between budget sections, but merely to indicate that greater flexibility in the use of staff resources was the only way to respond rapidly and more effectively to changing circumstances and mandates.

33. It had become apparent from discussions with management and staff at various duty stations away from Headquarters that measures were required to upgrade the skills of the staff and improve morale in order to increase the Organization's effectiveness. In that connection, the Department had reviewed training programmes and had noted the enormous demand placed on the small budget for that area. Given that the Organization was being called upon to undertake so many major new activities, it would be necessary to equip staff better for such assignments. Accordingly, training, especially management training, was high on the list of priorities. Management training was important because of the strong link between effective leadership and management and high staff morale, productivity and career satisfaction. The United Nations currently devoted a mere 0.27 per cent of its staff costs to occupational and management training, whereas United Nations agencies, such as UNICEF and the World Bank, spent an average of eight times as much. The Secretary-General would shortly issue a report on the subject. If delegations were truly committed to making a difference, they would join with the Department in identifying the necessary resources.

34. Also during 1992, human resources experts from the French and Australian Governments had worked with the Office of Human Resources Management to produce a report on career development, to be issued shortly. The plan, if implemented, could dramatically change the way in which the United Nations administered its personnel system and provide better personnel services.

35. Managers and staff consistently complained about the cumbersome and complicated personnel system that had developed over the history of the Organization. That system was in need of change. When the Committee reviewed the report on career development, it should consider increased appropriations for occupational and management training; it should introduce meaningful performance evaluation to assess staff performance and ensure accountability and revise the cumbersome rebuttal procedure; and it should improve the status of women, who currently held only 30 per cent of posts subject to geographical distribution.

36. In conclusion, the Department of Administration and Management was seeking to improve the quality of services provided both to Member States and other departments, reduce the time needed to deliver services and also reduce costs, which meant ensuring that resources allocated for an activity were spent cost-effectively. The goal was to develop a vision of change that would be shared by all members of the Secretariat. While reform would not take place overnight, he was confident that with the cooperation of all concerned the Department would be able to report significant achievements to the Committee in 1993.

37. Mr. HUSLID (Norway), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that the Committee had recognized the urgency of agenda items 106 and 107 by deciding to consider them at the very beginning of the session. It was now necessary to show the political will to reach an agreement that would improve the grim financial situation of the United Nations. The Nordic countries found it hard to understand why the vast majority of the Member States failed to paid their assessed contributions to either the regular budget or peace-keeping operations. It was paradoxical that the same Members that were asking the Organization to assume important new peace-keeping responsibilities were unwilling to provide it with the financial resources it needed to carry them out. The members of the Security Council had a special responsibility in that regard.

38. Countries which, like the Nordic countries, faithfully met their financial obligations to the Organization, were coming under mounting domestic pressure as a result of the dramatic increase in appropriations for peace-keeping operations and the sizeable amounts outstanding in reimbursement for the peace-keeping troops they had made available to the Organization. With so many States holding back their contributions, countries which had in the past paid in full, on time and without conditions were less inclined to do so. It was a vicious cycle that must be broken.

39. Turning to the specific proposals made in the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/47/13), he said that the Nordic countries favoured the proposal to charge interest on unpaid balances, which was a common business practice, and they hoped that the General Assembly would take decisive action on it during its forty-seventh session. They also reiterated their strong support for the establishment of a temporary Peace-keeping Reserve Fund to meet the initial expenses of peace-keeping operations and would participate actively in informal consultations on that topic. They supported the proposal to increase the Working Capital Fund to approximately 25 per cent of the annual assessment under the regular budget as a means of improving liquidity.

40. The Nordic countries had doubts about the proposal to give the Secretary-General authorization to borrow commercially in the event of a cash shortfall, since external borrowing would only increase the Organization's overall costs without solving the underlying problem of arrears. The creation of a United Nations Peace Endowment Fund was an interesting and innovative idea. However, the proposed target of $1 billion was unreasonable in view of the ongoing financial crisis, and the implications of any such expansion of the Organization's revenue base would require further study before a decision could be taken. Similarly, while consideration should be given to the proposal for the General Assembly to appropriate one third of the estimated cost of each new peace-keeping operation as soon as the Security Council decided to establish the operation, it should be examined in the light of the reserve fund for peace-keeping operations and of the ongoing discussions on the authority of the Council and General Assembly. Lastly, although the Nordic countries acknowledged the possible occasional need for the

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Secretary-General to place contracts without competitive bidding, they thought that any significant increase in that practice should be avoided for reasons of fairness and accountability.

41. The Nordic countries noted with interest the Secretary-General's invitation to a group of international experts to examine the question of the financing of the United Nations and looked forward to discussing his comments on the outcome of its consultations in the Committee.

42. In conclusion, he urged all Member States that had not yet paid their assessed contributions for 1992 or previous years to do so promptly. As long as Member States failed to pay in full and on time in accordance with their statutory obligations, the financial crisis would continue.

43. Mr. KUKAN (Czechoslovakia), after calling the attention of the Committee to the seriousness of the Organization's financial situation, said that his country fully supported the solution proposed in document A/46/600/Add.1. It was incumbent on Members to pay their assessed contributions, particularly in the light of the increased authority assumed by the United Nations with the end of the cold war. However, it was equally important to take steps to improve the Organization's efficiency and to limit the growth of the budget.

44. Czechoslovakia was one of the few countries that paid its contributions to the United Nations regular budget in full and on time. It also did its best to meet its obligations with respect to peace-keeping operations, although it was not always able to make all payments on time. Indeed, information which had come to light after the 1989 revolution showed his country to be much less prosperous than previously believed. For example, in an attempt to present a rosy picture of Czechoslovakia's economy, the former authorities had maintained unrealistic official exchange rates for the national currency. Thus, the statistics on which Czechoslovakia's contribution to the budget of the United Nations was based had overstated the country's real per capita income. The 1980s had in fact been a period of economic hardship and decline for Czechoslovakia. It was now going through the first difficult stage of its transition to a market economy in an unfavourable economic climate.

45. His delegation intended to submit a draft resolution to the Committee asking the General Assembly to transfer Czechoslovakia from group B to group C of the scheme for the apportionment of costs for peace-keeping operations. He was confident that the Committee would approve its request.

46. Mr. CHUINKAM (Cameroon) said that it was wrong to expect the Organization to accomplish enormous new tasks without giving it the necessary resources. In the view of his delegation, the financial problem of the United Nations was both political and budgetary. Some Member States were using non-payment of their assessed contributions as a political weapon to influence the Organization, while others were genuinely unable to pay in full and on time.

(Mr. Chuinkam, Cameroon)

He hoped that the recent reforms in the Secretariat would undermine the argument of inefficiency and would force countries in the first category to make it abundantly clear to their citizens that if they wanted the United Nations to maintain international peace and security, they would have to pay for it. On the other hand, he had great sympathy for the countries that were honestly unable to pay their contributions. While Cameroon had always made the sacrifices necessary to meet its financial obligations, it had sometimes been late in doing so.

47. His delegation could support the idea of charging interest on arrears owed by Member States only if a distinction was made between the two categories of States so that those truly unable to pay were not punished unfairly. Similarly, commercial borrowing was an acceptable emergency solution only if the interest on the loans was borne by Member States that had the means, but not the will, to pay their assessed contributions.

48. His delegation accepted the establishment of a temporary Peace-keeping Reserve Fund in principle, although it did not think it would provide a long-term solution to the liquidity problem. It did not object to the suspension of the relevant financial regulations in order to permit the retention of budgetary surpluses as long as the measure was temporary, since the surpluses belonged to the Member States. In the light of the exponential increase in humanitarian activities, it supported the creation of a Humanitarian Revolving Fund financed from voluntary contributions. It was also in favour of imposing a levy on arms sales for the purpose of maintaining an Arms Register, as well as one on international air travel. A general tax exemption for contributions made to the United Nations by foundations, businesses and individuals was a good idea, as was the proposal to establish a revolving peace-keeping reserve fund of $50 million. However, it could not commit itself on the companion proposal of authorizing the General Assembly to appropriate one third of the estimated cost of each new peace-keeping operation immediately. In its view, detailed cost estimates should be considered before any appropriations were approved. If the proposal were to be implemented at all, such appropriations should be made on a case-by-case basis.

49. With respect to the proposal on the award of contracts, his delegation wished to know what circumstances would be exceptional enough to necessitate their award without competitive bidding. It would also like to see a detailed explanation or a specific proposal regarding any changes in the formula for calculating the scale of assessments for peace-keeping operations.

50. Mr. JAMRAH (Malaysia) reiterated his delegation's concern about the long-standing financial crisis of the United Nations, which was further aggravated by the unprecedented increase in the number of its peace-keeping operations. The root of the problem lay not in financial mismanagement but in the failure of Member States, especially major contributors, to pay their assessed contributions in full and on time. His delegation was particularly

(Mr. Jamrah, Malaysia)

dismayed that more than half of the total arrears were owed by two of the five permanent members of the Security Council.

51. Malaysia was in general agreement with the ideas proposed by the Secretary-General in document A/C.5/47/13. However, he wished to stress that any measures adopted should be temporary, pending the payment of assessed contributions. They should also comply with the relevant statutory provisions and should not impose an undue burden on developing countries in dire straits.

52. The Secretary-General's proposal to charge interest at commercial rates on Member States in arrears on their assessed contributions was timely and merited careful consideration. Nevertheless, his delegation agreed with the opinion expressed in the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) (A/46/765) that a more detailed explanation would be required. It would also be necessary to determine whether the proposal was in conformity with the relevant provisions of the Charter.

53. His delegation shared the doubts expressed by ACABQ and by other delegations as to the viability of commercial borrowing. Not only would the interest incurred increase the Organization's financial burden, but it would also be difficult to agree on a fair formula for apportioning the expense. Moreover, as a world body, the United Nations should not be indebted to commercial financial institutions.

54. The immediate establishment of a revolving peace-keeping reserve fund of $50 million was a practical suggestion which should command the consensus of the Member States, since the fund would be quite similar to the Humanitarian Revolving Fund. His delegation was prepared to discuss the various modalities for its funding with other interested delegations. However, it reserved the right to comment on the proposal to establish a United Nations Peace Endowment Fund of $1 billion until all the reports of the Secretary-General on the administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of United Nations peace-keeping operations were available.

55. Mr. KINCHEN (United Kingdom) said that his delegation would welcome additional information concerning the cash-flow situation above and beyond that contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/47/13) and in the statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management. In the past, figures had been provided showing the cash balances available in the General Fund and peace-keeping accounts at the end of each month. He asked whether such figures could be provided for the current year, indicating the actual position for each month up to the end of September and the Secretariat's projections for each month up to the end of December. He felt sure that the information would be very useful to delegations.

56. The CHAIRMAN said that he would ask the Secretariat to provide the information concerned.

57. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) endorsed the request made by the representative of the United Kingdom. Although the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management had said that an additional $1 billion was to be appropriated for the next six months to cover all peace-keeping operations, he was aware that there had been considerable delay in submitting the budget estimates for the next stage of the operations and was concerned that the Committee's work programme might be affected. Any delay would jeopardize the timely issuance of letters of assessment to States and could precipitate a financial crisis. He would therefore welcome information on the preparation of the budget proposals for the next stage of the peace-keeping operations.

58. Mr. BAUDOT (Acting Controller) said that it had been anticipated that a request for an additional appropriation for the peace-keeping operation in Cambodia would be submitted to the Fifth Committee through ACABQ during the current month. However, because of the need to collect accurate information for the performance report on the first six months of the operation, which was to be submitted together with the new budget request, that had not been possible. The letters of assessment would be sent out immediately after the budget was submitted, which he hoped would be in mid-November. In addition, a request from the Secretariat for authority to spend after 31 October and before the General Assembly adopted the new budget was currently before ACABQ.

59. Mr. AL MAKTARI (Yemen) said that he agreed with the Secretary-General that the financial crisis was due mainly to the delay in the payment of contributions to the regular budget and peace-keeping operations. However, there were also other factors, notably the substantial sums spent on experts, which accounted for 80 per cent of budget expenditure, compared with the 20 per cent devoted to humanitarian projects.

AGENDA ITEM 110: PATTERN OF CONFERENCES (A/47/7/Add.1, A/47/32, A/47/287, and A/47/366; A/C.5/47/1)

60. Mr. KARBUCZKY (Hungary), Chairman of the Committee on Conferences, introducing the report of the Committee on Conferences (A/47/32), said that in 1992 the Committee had devoted much of its attention to issues regarding the control and limitation of documentation. In all its work, the Committee had taken into account the responsibilities entrusted to it by the General Assembly in resolution 43/222 B, bearing in mind the ultimate goal of achieving cost-effective management of meetings-servicing and documentation resources while maintaining the high quality of services. The Committee had focused its attention on three fronts, namely individual Member States, intergovernmental organs and the Secretariat, which all had a role to play in achieving that goal. It had formulated guidelines for Member States and intergovernmental organs and issued directives to the Secretariat, in an effort to increase its influence on all three fronts. Following extensive discussions, 18 specific recommendations had been made directly to the General Assembly and other directives had been issued to the Secretariat.

(Mr. Karbuczky, Hungary)

61. The draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 1993 contained in annex I was essentially an updated version of the one approved in 1991 and had been reviewed and amended in order to increase the efficient utilization of limited conference resources, avoid overlapping, and ensure that input from ACABQ was available to intergovernmental and expert bodies when they considered administrative and financial matters. The Committee's recommendations were set out in paragraphs 9 to 16 of the report and included a recommendation to the General Assembly that it should request all subsidiary bodies to seek the technical advice of the Office of Conference Services on the availability of conference-servicing facilities before making recommendations on or adjustments to the dates and periodicity of future sessions, in order to avoid situations where the Secretariat faced a fait accompli in the form of decisions on sessional dates that could not be serviced from existing permanent resources. The Committee had also requested the Secretariat to present to the General Assembly at its current session a statement of programme budget implications on the proposed restructuring of the intergovernmental machinery of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). In addition, the Committee had requested the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme and the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund to continue to evaluate their meeting and documentation requirements with a view to reducing them where possible, and to report to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session.

62. The Committee had again reviewed the utilization statistics of a core sample of United Nations organs and had found the overall performance during 1991 to be encouraging, with a collective utilization factor of 78 per cent - above the benchmark figure of 75 per cent previously set by the Committee. In response to the request made by the General Assembly in resolution 44/196 that it should review the methodology on conference-servicing utilization rates in order to provide a more accurate assessment of the overall use of resources, the Committee had developed a revised methodology which had been introduced on an experimental basis for a period of three years up to the end of 1992. Additional elements and calculations had been introduced and the experimental methodology would be evaluated in 1993, when the Committee would review each aspect of the calculations - the utilization factor, the planning accuracy factor, the meeting ratio and the availability index on pre-session documentation - with a view to establishing standards for each of them.

63. In accordance with resolution 46/190, all subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly and of the Economic and Social Council were required to undertake informal consultation with a view to improving the utilization of conference-servicing resources and to report back to the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences, which would review the replies received and examine cases where the utilization factor had been lower than the established benchmark figure for at least three sessions. In order to have available the most complete information possible, the Committee had decided to consider that question in 1993. In the interim, however, the Committee had reviewed the information so far received and had decided to recommend to the General

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Assembly that it should urge all United Nations bodies to maximize the accuracy with which they forecast the number of fully serviced meetings they would require, notably through improved planning of informal consultations. It had also requested the Chairman to consult with the chairmen of organs whose utilization factor had been lower than the established benchmark figure for the last three sessions, with a view to making appropriate recommendations for the optimum utilization of conference services.

64. In an effort to increase Member States' awareness of what could be done to make the most efficient use of limited and costly resources, the Committee had asked the Secretariat to develop a notional "cost per hour of meeting time" and to bring it to the attention of the members of all United Nations organs. The Committee had also examined trends in meeting and documentation requirements and conducted a detailed assessment of the current situation of coordinated planning of all organizational aspects of conference servicing, with a view to developing a system of global planning and coordination.

65. The availability and clarity of documentation was crucial to the ability of delegations to participate fully in the work of intergovernmental organs and the timeliness and length of documents was of major concern to all delegations, as shown by the many General Assembly resolutions on the subject. Furthermore, it was clear that Member States and intergovernmental bodies bore a certain responsibility with regard to documentation, since their actions or decisions often had a direct influence on its timing, length and quantity.

66. The Committee had reviewed a report on compliance by subsidiary bodies with the 32-page limit for reports and, with a view to reducing the volume of documentation and keeping delegations fully informed, had decided to recommend to the General Assembly that it should request the Secretariat to bring the relevant resolutions, rules and regulations governing documentation to the attention of all organs at the start of sessions, that it should ask Member States to exercise restraint in requesting the circulation of communications as official documents and in the submission of reports, and that it should urge subsidiary organs to comply with the 32-page limit, in an effort to reduce the length of reports without compromising on quality or on mandated reporting obligations.

67. In addition, the Committee had requested the Secretariat, in cooperation with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, to incorporate information on the preferred format for reports and on documentation processing costs into existing briefings and training programmes for new delegates and Secretariat officials responsible for preparing final reports of United Nations bodies, with the aim of ensuring more concise reports. The Secretariat had also been asked to prepare a model for final reports of subsidiary organs, based on existing drafting guidelines, for the Committee's continued consideration of the agenda item.

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68. With regard to the question of written meeting records, the Committee had decided to recommend to the General Assembly that it should ask the Secretariat to issue the verbatim records of the plenary meetings of the Assembly in final form, on the understanding that consolidated corrigenda would be issued at appropriate intervals, in order to make the final text of records available promptly and to reduce costs. The Committee had also asked the Secretariat to consider the possibility of issuing Security Council verbatim records in the same manner.

69. The Committee had asked the Secretariat to report to it at its 1993 substantive session on the validity of the guidelines used as the basis for recommendations on the provision of written meeting records to the subsidiary organs of the General Assembly.

70. The Committee had again noted a lack of compliance with the six-week rule for issuance of pre-session documentation and had decided to reaffirm its insistence on full compliance with that rule, in accordance with paragraph 24 of resolution 46/190. In that connection, the Committee had also decided to recommend that the General Assembly should appeal to intergovernmental bodies to make full use of the report on the state of pre-session documentation when reviewing the organizational arrangements for their substantive sessions, since it provided a useful tool for arranging their work. The General Assembly should also urge subsidiary organs to review their agendas to see if they could assist in compliance with the six-week rule by combining items and limiting requests for pre-session documentation wherever possible.

71. In addition, the Committee had requested the Secretariat to extend interdepartmental consultation in order to improve the timely availability of documentation. It had also asked the Secretariat to reissue the document explaining the indicator dates that appeared on all documents and to include that information in future issues of the "Information for Delegations" handbook.

72. The Committee had devoted considerable time to the review of the Office of Conference Services called for in resolution 46/190 and felt that the report of the Secretary-General on the subject (A/47/336) provided a useful examination of the problems concerned. The Committee noted the concrete recommendations made by the Secretariat and the actions undertaken, but felt that the cost-benefit aspects of the application of new technologies and the financial implications of the recommendations contained in the report had not been adequately addressed. Accordingly, the Committee had asked the Secretariat to continue to monitor developments affecting the performance of the Office of Conference Services in a number of different areas and to report on the subject to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session through the Committee on Conferences and ACABQ.

73. The Committee had recommended that the General Assembly should approve the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997

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relating to conference and library services. On the question of the organization of its own work, the Committee had decided to maintain the overall duration and annual periodicity of its sessions and to continue its biennial programme of work.

74. The Committee had also considered a report on the usefulness and feasibility of installing an appropriate signalling system whenever a speech time-limit is established in accordance with rule 72 of the rules of procedure (A/47/287) and had decided to recommend to the General Assembly that it should install portable devices of the kind described in paragraph 15 of the report in sufficient numbers and in the most cost-effective manner possible. The system could lead to significant savings in conference-servicing resources and should be brought to the attention of all organs and users.

75. Mrs. CESTAC (Assistant Secretary-General for Conference Services) said that events on the international political scene in recent years had had a major impact on the role of the Organization and, more specifically, on the functioning of the Office of Conference Services (OCS). The end of the "bipolarization" of international relations had enabled the Organization to emerge from the paralysis which had prevented it from fully playing its role under the Charter, while the situations calling for its intervention had multiplied spectacularly. As far as the impact of those developments on the Office of Conference Services was concerned, it would be simplistic to believe that the intensification and multiplication of field operations had had the effect of making the Organization's traditional role as a forum for communication between States recede into the background. The complex and often tragic situations which the United Nations was confronting with action in the field gave rise to intense diplomatic activity. The intensification of the activities of the Security Council and the multiplication of peace-keeping operations had resulted in a considerable increase in the volume of documentation processed and meetings serviced and required much greater flexibility on the part of OCS units, which had to be ready at any moment to respond at once to the needs of the Security Council and its subsidiary bodies (A/47/1). In all of 1987, the Council had held 49 official meetings, adopted 14 resolutions and issued 9 presidential statements; in the first seven months of 1992, it had held 81 official meetings, adopted 46 resolutions and issued 43 presidential statements. For the first half of 1987, the volume of documentation translated for the Council and its subsidiary organs amounted to 875,900 words, or 2,630 pages; for the first six months of 1992, the volume of that documentation reached 8.3 million words, or approximately 25,000 pages, which represented an almost tenfold increase.

76. The year 1992 marked a historic turning-point for the Secretariat. The Secretary-General had embarked upon an extensive reform of the Secretariat in the light of the new role taken on by the United Nations, in particular the intensification of its field operations. The first phase of the reform had entailed the regrouping of a number of offices or departments. As a result, the former Department of Conference Services had been transformed into an

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Office within the Department of Administration and Management. The second phase of the reform, currently under way, consisted in determining the implications, in terms of organization and methods, of the rationalization of the structure of the Secretariat decided upon at the beginning of 1992. It had already resulted in the freezing of 28 posts in OCS for possible redeployment, a decision taken in August 1992. The challenge faced by the Secretariat was to show that it could become the effective and flexible instrument which the revitalization of the Organization's role demanded, while the overall budget remained stable. For OCS, the challenge was particularly formidable. On the one hand, the Member States were concerned with controlling conference-servicing costs; on the other hand, despite the combined efforts of Member States, through the Committee on Conferences, ACABQ and the Fifth Committee, and of the Secretariat, it had not been possible to reduce the programmes which constituted the essential part of the Office's mandate - namely, the servicing of meetings of intergovernmental and expert bodies and the processing and distribution of the multilingual documentation required by those bodies. Indeed, the Office's services were more in demand than ever. Faced with that dilemma, it was intensifying its efforts to improve its methods and the organization of its services. It was making great strides, but there were limits to its latitude for action.

77. Although, at its 1992 session, the Committee on Conferences had focused mainly on documentation, it had raised questions which affected almost the whole of the mandate of the Office of Conference Services. Since the Chairman of the Committee had just given a detailed report, she would comment only on a few salient points.

78. First, among other special items included in its agenda, the Committee had been asked to give its views on the proposed revisions to programme 39 of the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997. Those proposals did not change the main thrust of the plan and were intended in essence to update the plan in the light of the evolution of the situation in certain areas. The Committee had recommended various improvements in the wording of the proposals and its recommendations had been brought to the attention of the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Finance.

79. The Committee had also approved the outline of a report on the Organization's publications policy to be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session, pursuant to resolution 46/185 B. She noted that, in a related decision, the Committee on Information, at its fourteenth session, had recommended that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to direct the Publications Board to develop criteria and review all publications and proposals for publications to ensure, inter alia, that each publication fulfilled an identifiable mandate and need, was timely, and did not duplicate other publications inside or outside the United Nations system.

80. However, the special item which had above all held the Committee's attention was the review of the Office of Conference Services requested by the

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General Assembly in resolution 46/190, the results of which were set out in the report of the Secretary-General in document A/47/336. That review had given OCS an opportunity, with the assistance of colleagues in the Management Advisory Service and a number of outside experts, to re-examine in detail the Office's structure, functioning and working methods. The Committee on Conferences had studied the Secretary-General's report very carefully and noted that it provided a good overview of the current situation in OCS. The recommendations in the report could be divided into three categories. First, there were those which, as stated in paragraph 35 of the report, could be implemented by OCS within its established mandate and policy guidelines; steps had already been initiated to implement those recommendations.

81. The reason why the list of those steps included in the report was not longer was that the solution to a number of the problems noted during the review fell within the framework of the strategy defined in the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 as adopted by the General Assembly. Second, there were recommendations which, although not involving any modification of the mandate of OCS or of the guidelines governing its work, could not be implemented immediately because the necessary resources had not been allocated in the budget for the current biennium. The Office intended to carry out a thorough cost-benefit analysis of the measures recommended, as advocated by the Committee on Conferences, and on the basis of the results of that analysis would include them in its budget proposals for the biennium 1994-1995. Third, there were recommendations which required policy guidance or other decisions by Member States, either because they involved changes in the working methods of some bodies or because they called for a review of the entitlements of certain bodies whose rate of utilization of the services made available to them had for several years been below the benchmark established by the Committee on Conferences. It was on those few, but very important, recommendations that the Fifth Committee would be asked to give its views.

82. With regard to documentation, the Committee on Conferences had deplored the lack of progress on two long-standing issues in particular: compliance by the Secretariat with the six-week rule for the distribution of pre-session documentation, and compliance with the 32-page limit for reports of subsidiary organs. She was grateful that the Committee had not only recommended that the General Assembly should strongly reaffirm the six-week rule, compliance with which by OCS depended on author departments meeting the 10-week deadline established for the submission of manuscripts of pre-session documents. With the aim of facilitating compliance with the six-week rule, the Committee on Conferences had suggested that subsidiary organs should try to streamline their agendas by combining certain items; that would, in principle, result in a reduction in the number of studies and reports to be submitted to those organs before their sessions. She noted that the Committee had shown a certain realism about the expected results of that further reminder by accompanying its recommendation with an appeal to the organs concerned to make active use of the report on the state of preparation of their pre-session documentation when drawing up their programme of work for a session. She

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welcomed the fact that the Committee not only recommended that the General Assembly should once again draw attention to the 32-page rule, but also made suggestions which should facilitate its implementation by the subsidiary organs and by the Secretariat, and urged that a model for such reports, based on existing guidelines, should be submitted for its consideration in 1994. She also welcomed the Committee's recommendation that Member States should try to limit the length of the communications which they requested to have circulated as official documents of the Organization - as they had a sovereign right to do - and that they should ensure that they submitted such communications in the most complete, concise and timely manner possible.

83. In the light of the statistics available, she could not but share the practical realism demonstrated by the Committee on Conferences. But realism did not mean defeatism: the Office of Conference Services, from its uncomfortable position at the end of the documentation production line, worked tirelessly, year after year, to remind the secretariats of the various deliberative organs of the need to comply with the rules established by the General Assembly regarding the time-limits for submission and the length of documents, emphasizing that any infringement of those rules risked disturbing the functioning of intergovernmental organs. The Committee on Conferences was well aware of that, and for that reason it had asked the Secretariat to intensify interdepartmental consultations and cooperation. At interdepartmental coordination meetings, OCS reaffirmed the need for compliance and, not discouraged, emphasized that the pile-ups caused by the late submission of documents placed a burden on its budget and jeopardized the quality of documentation.

84. Although, in connection with the calendar of conferences the Committee on Conferences had confined itself to considering the changes proposed for 1993 in the biennial calendar adopted by the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session, it had considered a number of conference room papers which were indicative of developments in the meetings-servicing situation. Some encouraging progress could be noted from the information provided to the Committee, for example regarding the rate of utilization of meetings services made available to intergovernmental and expert bodies. Also in connection with meetings services, the Committee, in the context of the review of the structure and functioning of OCS, had expressed great interest in what had come to be called the global planning of conferences and meetings.

85. The system of global planning was one example of the measures being taken to improve the efficiency of the services provided and to achieve savings. The aim of the Interpretation and Meetings Division was to make the fullest possible use of United Nations conference facilities and services world wide. The process began with the drawing up of the calendar of conferences: in the light of the constraints deriving from the mandates of the various organs, the prescribed channels for the consideration of reports and the established rules with respect to the venue, periodicity and duration of sessions of individual bodies, an effort was made to ensure that meetings at the three main

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conference centres - Headquarters, the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG), and the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV) - were spread out as evenly as possible throughout the year. Since the constraints which she had mentioned made it difficult to achieve that objective fully, OCS sought at least to ensure that peak periods did not occur in the different centres at the same time, so that exchanges of language staff were possible. She cited the example of the team of interpreters from the United Nations Office at Vienna, during the summer slack period, some of whom had joined New York-based staff to provide services first for the Rio Conference on Environment and Development and then for the session of the Economic and Social Council. Interpreters from Vienna had also assisted the United Nations Office at Geneva in July and August. She added that, as far as translation was concerned, it obviously made more sense - and was now possible thanks to technology for the transmission of text in electronic form - to shift some documents from one centre to another rather than to move staff around. In planning for meetings away from the permanent conference centres, OCS carefully evaluated the various options that existed in order to identify the one which would deliver the required services at the lowest cost, taking into account such factors as the possibility of assigning permanent staff from UNOG, UNOV, Headquarters or the regional commissions without replacement; the possibility of recruiting freelance interpreters and translators locally; and the comparative costs of pay for staff available locally versus the travel and subsistence allowances for staff who could be assigned from other centres.

86. Several other examples could be cited of measures which had been taken to make optimum use of the appropriations allocated to OCS for the current biennium. As soon as the decision was made to replace the Wang system with WordPerfect software in its word-processing units, the Office had taken steps to take advantage of the new opportunities which that software offered for improving the presentation of documents while achieving savings in the use of paper and in documents storage. Thus, as recommended in the Secretary-General's report, the Office intended to adopt new page formatting for documents which, without any reduction in legibility, would allow for a 30 to 40 per cent increase in the number of words per page. Similarly, WordPerfect software would allow for much wider use of desktop publishing in producing the bound supplements, thereby yielding substantial savings in external printing costs. Those savings would be reflected in the budget estimates for the biennium 1994-1995. Similarly, in the area of publications, the introduction of a network of workstations with desktop publishing capacity in the Cartographic, Graphic Presentation and Copy Preparation and Proofreading Units would make possible substantial savings in contractual printing costs. In addition, use of laminating machines and colour presses, and the acquisition of new binding equipment would also enable much of the work which previously had to be sent to outside contractors to be done in-house. One last initiative which had been endorsed by the Committee on Conferences was the possibility of issuing the verbatim records of the plenary Assembly in final form, with any corrections issued in a consolidated corrigendum at the end of the session, as was already done for the verbatim

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records of the First Committee. That procedure would result in considerable savings, since the verbatim records would no longer have to be printed and distributed twice, and it would be possible, without the use of typesetting, to produce documents whose appearance would be the equal of that of the final verbatim records in their current form. In the area of translation, once the networked workstations provided for in the medium-term plan were in place, it was planned to take full advantage of the potential of computer-assisted translation, which would enable the translators to spend less time on research and preparation and more on translation proper, thanks to an integrated system of computer-based tools. Lastly, a number of benefits were expected to be reaped from the investments in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library which were included in the budget for the current biennium. Parallel to a streamlining of the Library's organizational structure, the introduction of an integrated library system would eliminate the need to enter the same information several times and would make the Dag Hammarskjöld Library a truly modern tool at the service of Member States and the Secretariat.

87. She had sought, with those examples, to illustrate the Office's constant concern to improve its procedures so as to achieve greater efficiency and economy. In the ongoing search for ways to serve Member States better, OCS strove to take advantage of the experience of other organizations of the United Nations system through the unique forum provided for that purpose by the Inter-agency Meetings on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications. Those meetings, whose work was followed up in the Administrative Committee on Coordination, afforded an opportunity each year to exchange information, compare problems with those of other organizations of the system and, in some cases, to draw inspiration from the solutions which some of them had devised.

88. The examples she had just given of the steps which had been taken clearly showed that the Office's attitude towards the difficulties it was facing was far from defeatist or fatalistic. None the less, she expected that there might be other questions about the efficiency and productivity of the Office of Conference Services. For the moment, she would confine herself to a general description of the current situation.

89. In four years, the number of meetings serviced by OCS staff annually had risen from 3,700 to more than 4,000, or an increase of 9 per cent. A comparison between the first six months of 1992 and the corresponding period in 1988 was even more revealing: there had been an increase of 16 per cent in the number of meetings receiving interpretation services, and a jump of 30 per cent in the total number of meetings, with or without interpretation. The number of interpreter assignments required to cover these meetings had likewise risen from 28,500 in 1988 to 30,250 in 1991. The annual number of meetings receiving summary record coverage had increased from 430 to 490 during the same period; lastly, the number of hours by which meetings had been extended had increased from 930 in 1987 to 980 in 1991.

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90. On the documentation front, the workload of the translation services had risen from 86.7 million words in 1988 to 95.4 million words in 1991, or an increase of 10 per cent, and preliminary figures for the first quarter of 1992 indicated an increase of 9 per cent in the workload as compared with the same period in 1991. The output of the word-processing units had risen from 163 million words to 186.5 million words between 1988 and 1991. The number of documents printed in the reproduction shops had risen during the same period from 37,700 (676 million page impressions) to 42,300 (approximately 737 million page impressions), or, once again, a 9 per cent increase.

91. During that same period, the staffing table of the Office of Conference Services had not remained the same. The staffing cuts of 1988-1989 had reduced the number of staff by more than 10 per cent, and, just a few months earlier, 28 Professional posts had been frozen with the intention of redeploying them elsewhere. Obviously, only an increase in productivity had enabled the Office, with fewer staff, to cope with an ever-growing workload. In some areas, those productivity gains were made possible by the adoption of technological innovations that had resulted in more effective working methods. In other areas, it had not been possible to improve working methods through technological innovations, either because the resources were unavailable, or because the tasks involved did not lend themselves to the application of such innovations, and the productivity gains had been achieved through more rigorous management of production flows. Most of the increased productivity, however, was attributable primarily to the dedication of the staff, who had made determined efforts to cope with increasingly difficult conditions.

92. The progress which had been made was, of course, a source of legitimate pride for OCS, but she would be remiss if she left the impression that it could continue to meet the difficult challenge to which she had referred earlier if the two contradictory trends which she had just described continued - on the one hand, the constant - and apparently accelerating - expansion in the volume of documentation and the number of meetings, and, on the other hand, the reduction in the number of staff. For example, delegations had deplored the growing delays in the simultaneous issuance of summary records in the six official languages. The reason for the delays was that, when faced with decisions on the allocation of its limited capacity, OCS must give priority to the processing of in-session documentation and pre-session documents that had been submitted late. At the current session, it would no doubt continue to produce summary records of the meetings of the Assembly's Main Committees in the languages in which they were drafted, but it would not have the necessary capacity to translate them for simultaneous issuance in all official languages during the session. In addition, it was already anticipated that it would not be able to process all the documentation required for the sessions of bodies scheduled to meet in the first few months of 1993.

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93. Since she had resolved to be realistic and frank, she must clearly describe the limits of the Office's margin for manoeuvre in the face of a workload over which it had no control. Each time it serviced a meeting, each time it processed a page of documentation, it was merely carrying out the assignment given to it by Member States. Once again, she hoped that the examples she had given of the constructive initiatives that had been taken clearly showed that that view was in no way indicative of a defeatist attitude. The Secretary-General himself had recognized that the number of documents requested of the Secretariat is greater than what it could produce in a timely manner, while striving to ensure high quality.

94. In illustrating the growth of the Office's workloads, she had used figures from a number of different conference-servicing activities. She did not wish to leave the mistaken impression that the Office performed a variety of independent and unconnected functions. Conference servicing was a complex and integrated operation in which the effectiveness of each component depended on the support of the others, and central planning and coordination played an essential role. Likewise, conference-servicing establishments in different duty stations did not function in isolation from each other. She also emphasized that the operation at Headquarters was part and parcel of a wider whole that encompassed conference services in Geneva, New York and Vienna. Furthermore, the provision of high quality services, in the most cost-effective manner, required constant interaction and consultation with Member States and substantive secretariats.

95. There was a tendency of late to think that, because the Organization had become more action-oriented than ever before, it was de-emphasizing its role as a catalyst of international cooperation. The experience of OCS tended to prove that the reality was otherwise. There was also a tendency to criticize the Secretariat as a huge bureaucracy that was indifferent to the historic upheavals that had redefined the role of the United Nations. It therefore bore repeating that there was nothing which the Office of Conference Services did that was not dictated by the mandate entrusted to it by Member States. The Office had always made it a point of honour to rise to the demands of the essential mission it had been given, no matter how difficult the conditions it faced. She feared, however, that the flexibility for manoeuvre which she had referred to had been exhausted, and the Office now counted more than ever before on Member States, especially the Fifth Committee, guided by the painstaking work done by the Committee on Conferences, to provide it with the means it needed to meet the difficult challenges which lay ahead.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.